



# Montgomery County Council

*From the Office of Councilmember Tom Perez*

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## Tom Perez Calls on Governor Ehrlich to Invest in Multicultural Communities

Councilmember Tom Perez, along with a broad and diverse group of elected officials and community activists, urged Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich to invest in multicultural communities across the state. "As the new face of Montgomery County and the State of Maryland, we invite you to take a closer look at who we are and what we need," Perez said.

At a press conference held at the Long Branch Community Center in Silver Spring, Maryland, Councilmember Perez noted that Montgomery County accurately reflects the future of our state's workforce and community. Of the county's 900,000 residents, 15.1% are African American; 11.5% are Latino; 11.3% are Asian and Pacific Islander; 0.3 are Native American; and 64.8% are Caucasian. County residents represent more than 163 nations and 122 languages. In addition to English, Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, French, Guaraní, Hebrew, Hindi, Korean, Laotian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Thai, Urdu, Vietnamese, and many other languages are also spoken in the County. "In the corporate world, multiculturalism is about competing in the global economy; businesses that do not pay close attention to our changing demographics and diversify their workforce will undoubtedly be left behind. Ehrlich claims to be a friend of business. I am surprised that he does not understand the business case for multiculturalism," Perez said.

Councilmember Perez indicated that recent immigrants are learning English at a faster pace than ever before. "Immigrants work two and three jobs and still find time to take English courses on the weekend in order to acquire better paying jobs. In Montgomery County, we have waiting lists for English classes that exceed 2,000, and the lists keep growing," Perez said. In the 2000 Census, approximately 105,000 Montgomery County residents indicated that they spoke English "less than very well. "Demand clearly exceeds supply; we need additional resources to address these challenges," Perez said.

Councilmember Perez called on Governor Ehrlich to be a uniter not a divider. "Governor Ehrlich, immigrants want what all Americans seek: good jobs, a quality education, good health, and a decent place to live. Multicultural communities simply need the tools and resources to get there. I invite you to join me and other local leaders in coming together to address the critical issues facing multicultural communities in our state," Perez said. ###